IS THIS JUICE KOSHER?
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – August 2, 2013

1. I was asked the other night why does it seem all rabbis are baseball fans? Baseball is very Jewish
    a. Torah begins 'In the Big Inning'
    b. The Jews in the bible are just trying to get home
    c. God rested on the 7th day or 7th inning stretch
    d. Of course Moses "hit the rock" after the children of Israel "struck out of Egypt"
2. Rabbis are baseball/sports
    a. Because success in professional sports demands discipline, hard work, and a competitive edge. We often see ourselves in the underdog and marvel at the apparent limitless of human ability.
    b. Sports speak to our natural desire for justice and fairness.
3. And so what are we to make of the latest doping scandal to hit major league baseball?
    a. Last week the first Jewish MVP in a generation Ryan Braun was suspended for the season.
    b. This week Alex Rodriquez faces a lifetime ban for his alleged role in teaching other players how to juice.
4. Judaism has something to say about the moral ethics of doping in sports and what it says is interesting for how serious Jewish ethics treat the issue.
5. **So what's the issue – what's the big deal about doping, why should we or Jewish law care**? – its just a game after all. Usually grown men – acting like boys.
    a. Of course, Judaism condemns cheating
    b. But our tradition recognizes that cheating involves more than breaking the rules.
    c. A Hebrew phrase used in the Talmud to indicate cheating is *geneivat da'at*, which

literally means the theft of the mind or in other words, cheaters who intentionally mislead or deceive others to gain undeserved goodwill are considered thieves.

i. "There are seven kinds of people who are guilty of stealing," our sages teach. "**First** among them are people who misrepresent themselves to others" (Tosefta, Baba Kama 7:3)."
ii. The 10 commandments declare Lo Tignov / thou shall not steal.
iii. The GREATEST sin in this category is *geneivat da'at* intentionally deceiving another.

d. *Geneivat da'at* goes beyond lying. Any words or actions that cause others to form incorrect conclusions about one's motives are a violation of this prohibition.
    i. the Torah explicitly states (Ex 23:7) 'Distance yourself from a false matter.'
e. The sages believed that there are seven types of thieves and, of these, the most egregious is the one who "steals the minds" of people.
    i. The Talmud gives the following example: a storekeeper is not permitted to sprinkle his store with wine or oil because he "steals the minds" of people. The problem with sprinkling one's store with a superior-quality, fragrant wine is that it may fool customers into believing that all the wine sold in the store is of the same high quality. People tend to rely on their sense of smell when purchasing products such as wine or oil.

ii. In sports we believe what we see and professional sports condition us to believe the unbelievable – the super human.

6. **Beyond condemning doping what is the greater lesson?**
    a. I often ask my BM students what does it mean to be a Jew
        i. Do the right thing
            1. Yes and…
        ii. Jewish ethics is not only do the right thing – that could be read as a minimalist *don't break the rules*
        iii. **RATHER** Jewish ethics are grounded in the Holiness Code – Kidoshim T'hiyu – YOU SHALL BE HOLY an *or lagoyim* a light or example to the nations.
        iv. **The purpose of Mitzvot like *Geneivat da'at* is to inculcate character traits that make people virtuous, a task that secular ethical systems gave up on long ago.**
        v. Alan Mittleman Professor of Jewish Thought at the Jewish Theological Seminary calls this a "perfectionist ethic," and he concedes that it is "austere, demanding, and uncompromising." Nonetheless, he believes and I and our tradition agree that such an ethic "opens up new possibilities for what a flourishing, well-lived life entails. Never being satisfied with our own behavior gives us a purpose for how we greet tomorrow."

7. **How do we live as a good moral and ethical Jews?**
    a. We remain unabashedly unsatisfied with our character at every moment – placing ourselves on a path to perpetual improvement.
    b. A good Jew says, "I can do better, I can be better' and we study, pray, practice and reflect on that at every day, 'At home and when we walk upon the way, when we lie down and when we rise up.'
        i. We are about to enter the month of Elul a time for *hesbone hanefesh* – examining our souls, our actions and interactions this past year. We do it every year.
        ii. No matter how good we think we've been – we can do better, we can be better.
        iii. That's not a burden, it's a blessing.