

TORAH THOUGHTS – GOOD AND BAD BEHAVIOR AT THE US OPEN

The US Open Tennis Championship started August 26 and ends this Sunday. I watched a few matches and as usual I was amazed by the athleticism and grit on display. Also, I was struck by both the good and the not so good behavior of two of the world's highest ranked players.

Coco Gauff is a 15-year-old American phenomenon. She cruised to the third round and faced the number one seed, Naomi Osaka of Japan. Osaka won easily, 6-3, 6-0, and when she saw that Gauff was distressed she consoled her. Further, she had Gauff stay for the post-match interview in front of the crowd, which is unusual. Osaka publicly praised her opponent, saying she's been following her progress and knows she will continue to develop. Humbled and overwhelmed with emotion, Gauff said, "She did amazing and I'm going to learn a lot from this match. She's been so sweet to me so thank you for this."

On the other end of the spectrum is Daniil Medvedev of Russia, who has been fined \$19,000 through three matches. The No. 5 seed was fined \$5,000 for unsportsmanlike conduct when he snatched a towel out of the hands of a ball boy, and \$4,000 for a visible obscenity when he held his middle finger up by the side of his head in defiance of the crowd. When the crowd booed, he responded with taunting, and he has also thrown his racket and verbally abused the chair umpire.

In Hebrew there is a concept called *derekh erez*. Literally translated it means "the way of the world" but it refers to common decency. While both Osaka and Gauff displayed it, especially the former, Medvedev showed an embarrassing lack of it.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Here are news stories with video clips.
 - a. <https://www.today.com/news/coco-gauff-naomi-osaka-share-heartwarming-display-sportsmanship-us-open-t161679?yptr=yahoo>
 - b. https://www.espn.com/tennis/story/_/id/27508210/medvedev-fined-9k-us-open-offenses-friday
2. In interacting with Medvedev, should the audience have shown more *derekh erez*? Why or why not?
3. Give examples you've witnessed of *derekh erez* and a lack thereof, in your own life and involving celebrities or politicians.

Shalom,

Rabbi Pont