

Key Parasha Information

Summary

Every seven years, the farming land in Israel must be allowed to rest. This is known as the Shemittah. Farmers may not plough, sow seeds, reap or do any jobs connected to produce growth, on the field. Any crops that grow naturally are considered ownerless and is free for anyone to take.

After seven Shemittot (non-growing years) over a span of 49 years, a 50th year, called the Yovel follows, where again, no work is done on the fields. In addition to this, during the Yovel, all land goes back to its original owner and any Eved Nirtza (servant who chose to be bound to their owner), is set free.

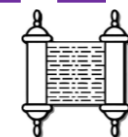
We also learn laws about selling land, not being a fraud and not using or tricking others for your own benefit.

Discovery

Did you know that during a Shemittah year, a farmer may take crops that have grown naturally on their land but only what he or she needs for that day?

Did you know that the Shemittah year is the land's Shabbat? We have a day of rest every seven days and the land gets a rest every seven years.

Did you know that Hashem promised farmers who keep the Shmitta that the 6th, 7th and 8th year will produce extra crops?



Parasha Thinking



- 1) What might a farmer worry about during the Shmitta year?
- 2) In your opinion, if all naturally grown produce is ownerless during the shemittah year, could a farmer go into another farmer's field and take crops to eat?
- 3) How does the word, land, link to the Parasha?

Counting the Omer:
Day 32
Today is the 32nd day making four weeks and four days of the omer.

Lag BaOmer

Lag BaOmer is the 33rd day of the Omer. During the Omer we don't listen to music, have haircuts or get married but all restrictions are lifted on Lag BaOmer and therefore, all celebrations can take place. At the age of 40, Rabbi Akiva didn't even know the difference between the letters Aleph and Bet but with the encouragement of his wife, Rachel, he studied Torah and worked hard at it and became the most respected Rabbi of the generation. Everybody wanted to learn from him and Rabbi Akiva accumulated 24,000 students. Each student was righteous and holy. They wanted to encourage each other but unfortunately, they did so in a taunting way and this left a bad feeling amongst them. A plague hit their place of study and each day during the Omer, more and more students died. To learn from this, we focus on kindness during the Omer. On Lag BaOmer, there were no deaths and this is why we celebrate and restrictions are lifted.

Games

1) Guess the Number

Link: every seven years was the Shemittah year and every 50 years was the Yovel year.

One person chooses a number between 1 and 100 and the rest of the group have to guess what the number is. The person who chose the number responds "higher" or "lower" to help guide the team to the correct answer.

2) Fruit Basket

Link: the land had to be left to rest for a year.

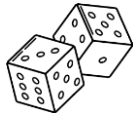
One child is 'it' and stands in the middle. Their chair is removed from the circle. The leader goes round and assigns all the remaining children a fruit; apple, orange, grape. The 'it' child calls out one of the fruits, e.g. grapes and all the grape children have to switch seats amongst themselves and the 'it' has to try to sit in one of their chairs. The last child remaining is the new 'it' and calls out a different fruit and whilst they swap, the 'it' tries to sit down. If the 'it' calls fruit basket, then all the children switch seats.

3) Tricking Ya

Link: We're not allowed to trick people

Resources: tissues

One child volunteers to stand outside and the leader chooses someone in the room, to sit on a tissue. Unbeknown to the child who goes out, when they come in, everyone will try to trick them into believing that they are the one who is sitting on the tissue. Can they actually guess correctly?



Story

(One of the children can read this out loud – encourage them to use expression.)

“Ooooooooooh, ROAST!” laughed everyone at break time, as they were sitting on the field. Bobby had just got Dan real bad and everyone felt that one.

Dan was so embarrassed as this roast had rung true and he turned a shade of crimson. He started to scream at Bobby, “You ALWAYS take things too far! You don’t know how much your roasts hurt! How would you like it if people said even half the mean things you say, back to you! You wouldn’t like it one little bit, so why do you think it’s ok to speak like that to other people? In fact,” he paused and looked around at the circle of friends, “I actually don’t want to be friends with this group anymore. How can friends think it’s ok to encourage nasty words to be said to each other and not stick up for each other? It’s ludicrous. Don’t et me wrong, you are all so nice in many ways but this roasting is JUST NOT IT!” and with that, Dan stood up, brushed off the grass from his uniform and went to sit with a different group of people.

His friends were a little shell shocked and didn’t quite know what to say. They sat in silence thinking about what Dan had said, knowing on the one hand that it was true – mean words are not nice but on the other hand, roasting is just a bit of fun, isn’t it? Eventually, Maddie spoke, “Guys,” she started, “I think we are in the wrong! Dan’s right – we shouldn’t be mean to each other. We know from all the times we’ve been roasted that it actually really hurts. Yes, it’s usually funny to hear someone else being roasted but it’s not so funny when you’re the subject of the roast, is it?”

“I agree with you” Ben told the group. “I was just thinking that there are other funny things we can do as a group, that doesn’t involve being insensitive to each other.” Everyone nodded.

Bobby stood up and told the group he was going over to apologise to Dan. He went over and the group watched as he called Dan over and it looked like he was genuinely apologising to him. It worked and Bobby and Dan came back to the group and Bobby apologised to the entire group for all the times he’d been mean and he promised to use kinder words in the future. As the bell went for the end of break, everyone stood up and smiled, knowing that they had done something really good, which will lead to great kindness between them in the future.

1) What can we learn from this story and how does it connect to Lag BaOmer? (see sheet 1 for more information on Lag BaOmer)

2) Have you ever been roasted? How did you feel?

3) Ben suggested that there are other ways they can entertain themselves without being mean. What can you suggest?

