



Welcome to Spark2, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service. The US is very proud of the numerous Children's Services that are run every week across the UK and this would not happen without you.

Spark2 gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, activity or Dvar Torah linked to the parsha or important event that week. Every children's service will be different, in terms of how many participants there are, their age range, its length and the varying abilities of the children. Please read through the document and find the activities that will best suit the needs of your group. It is advisable to read it before Shabbat in case there is some preparation that may be needed in advance.

I hope you and the children at your service will benefit from Spark2. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if I can be of any help.

With best wishes,
Sharon Radley
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Bo

Parsha Summary:

- In this week's parsha we see the eighth plague of locusts and the ninth plague of darkness. However Pharaoh still refuses to release the Children of Israel from slavery.
- Pharaoh is warned about the coming 'plague of the first born'.
- God gives the Israelites their first mitzvah, that of Rosh Chodesh – determining the New Moon and establishing a lunar calendar.
- God tells Moshe to instruct the people to choose a lamb for the Pesach offering. The lamb was to be sacrificed and eaten together with matzah and bitter herbs on the eve of the fifteenth of Nissan. The blood of the lamb was to be smeared on the lintels and doorposts of the Israelites homes. All inside these homes would be spared when God brought the tenth plague on the Egyptian firstborn. This is followed by the instruction for all further generations to celebrate the festival of Passover on which no leaven bread may be eaten or possessed.
- The tenth plague begins and Pharaoh surrenders. The Children of Israel begin the departure from Egypt at midday on the fifteenth of Nissan. They take with them the dough that was baked before having time to rise.
- The parsha concludes with God giving several more mitzvot to the Israelites. These include the commandment to sanctify all male firstborn children to God, to eat matzah on Pesach, to recount the story of Exodus at the Seder, to

bring all male firstborn kosher animals as sacrifices and to wear tefillin on the head and arm.

- The Children of Israel begin their departure from Egypt, and we are commanded to always remember the Exodus.

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

Included here are some of the activities from Spark2 Parshat Vaeira

Activity 1:

Play the minute game:

Ask all the children to stand and put their hands behind their backs (in case they are wearing a watch.) Check to see if there is a clock in the room and if there is, stand the children with their backs towards it. Explain to the children that you are going to see which one of them is able to work out exactly how long a minute is. When you say 'start' you will time a minute. The children should try to work out when the minute is finished. When they think it is over they should sit down. You will tell them who was the closest to the actual end of the minute.

Why did you play this game?

Well, in the parsha this week God gives the Jewish people their first mitzvah, that of Rosh Chodesh – determining the new moon and also to establish a lunar calendar.

Discuss the concept of celebrating Rosh Chodesh.

- How do we know when it is Rosh Chodesh?
- What does the moon look like at the beginning, middle and end of the month?
- What month are we in now?
- When was Rosh Chodesh?
- What should the moon look like at the moment? Encourage the children to take a look at the moon during the week.
- What special activities do we do on Rosh Chodesh?
- Show the children the Blessing for the New Month on page 155 in the green Tribe Siddur for Children and Families.

Song of the months – to the tune of *'Bobby Shaftoe'*

Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz,
Av, Ellul, Tishrei, Cheshvan,
Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar,
And Adar Sheni.

Activity 2:

The ninth plague was darkness. It was different from many of the other plagues, where something unpleasant was added to daily life, e.g. frogs or locusts. Here, something that is a basic part of everyday life, was taken away – the ability to see!

We are told that the darkness was so intense, that the Egyptians could not even move.

- Play a game involving blindfolds, to represent the darkness of the plague. An example game is given below.

Divide the group into smaller groups. Every person in the group should sit blindfolded either around a table or in a circle. One person sits out without a blindfold, but must keep their hands behind their back. Spread puzzle pieces across the table in front of the blindfolded group. Use simple puzzles, such as kindergarten age puzzles with large, obvious shapes. The group must try to assemble the pieces into a completed puzzle. The person who can see cannot touch the pieces but they can give advice or directions to the group to help them put the puzzle together completely.

Children's Service: Year 3-6

Activity 1:

Play the minute game.

Ask all the children to stand and put their hands behind their backs (in case they are wearing a watch.) Check to see if there is a clock in the room and if there is, stand the children with their backs towards it. Explain to the children that you are going to see which one of them is able to work out exactly how long a minute is. When you say 'start' you will time a minute. The children should try to work out when the minute is finished. When they think it is over they should sit down. You will tell them who was the closest to the actual end of the minute.

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Discuss the concept of celebrating Rosh Chodesh.

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- What does the moon look like at the beginning, middle and end of the month?
- What month are we in now?
- When was Rosh Chodesh?
- What should the moon look like at the moment? Encourage the children to take a look at the moon during the week.
- What special activities do we do on Rosh Chodesh?
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Why did God choose Rosh Chodesh as the first mitzvah for the Jewish people? It seems a bit of a strange first commandment!

What was so important about the development of the calendar? Why was the Jewish calendar based on the moon? What was wrong with the solar calendar that everyone else had been using?

Well, determining the new month was done by people. As soon as the new moon was seen a person would run to the Jewish High Court who would need two witnesses, convene a court, declare a new month and send messengers around the land. It was a very 'human' process. God was giving the Jewish people a strong message. Up to this point they had been slaves and not in charge of their own time. Now that the people were being freed from slavery, God is telling them that they are masters of their own time!

A unique feature of the moon is that it waxes and wanes. Whereas the sun stays the same size, the moon appears to us to disappear and reappear, to grow and shrink. The fact that we follow the lunar calendar is a message to us that just when things look their darkest – light shines again. Nothing is set in stone. Situations can change and we can reinvent ourselves and change for the better however hard things seem. The Jewish people had been in slavery for two hundred and ten years yet now the tide was turning and they were being freed. Fifty days after leaving Egypt the Jewish nation would receive the Torah! This is the powerful message behind the giving of the commandment to sanctify the moon each month and determine the lunar calendar. When things seem dark and hopeless – light is around the corner!

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Activity 3:

Below are some of the activities from the parsha last week, Parshat Va'eira which included the first seven of the plagues. These activities would be suitable for the parsha this week too.

Drama ideas:

- Ask a child to be Mrs. Pharaoh trying to convince her husband to let the Jews go. She can be talking after or during any of the plagues.
- One child should be an advisor to Pharaoh and the other child should be Pharaoh. They should act out the advisor speaking to Pharaoh. What will he say to him? Will he try to convince Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go or will he encourage him to keep them as slaves?

- Children should act out a weather report from Egypt during the time of the plagues.